

**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**  
**Fourth Session**  
**Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001**

**INTRODUCTION OF THE REPORT OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

Statement by Mr. Stuart Harbinson, Chairman of the General Council

I have the honour to present to you today the Report to the Ministerial Conference adopted by the General Council on 31 October 2001, covering the activities of the various WTO bodies for the year 2001. In doing so, I would like to make a few comments on the three major areas of our work in 2001 - namely the regular work of the Council, the implementation review process and the preparations for the Doha Ministerial Conference.

With regard to the regular work of the General Council, let me highlight the following points.

The General Council has established three working parties to examine requests for accession by The Bahamas, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Tajikistan. The Council has also adopted the Decision on the Accession of Moldova as the 142<sup>nd</sup> Member of the WTO. Finally, the accession of both China and Chinese Taipei will be considered for action by Ministers at the present Ministerial Conference. These decisions are in keeping with our objective of making the WTO a truly universal organization. In this respect many Members feel that efforts should be maintained to accelerate the accession processes for outstanding, as well as future requests.

As part of the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce, the General Council has engaged in substantive discussions based on the reports submitted to it by the subsidiary Councils and Committees as well as on other relevant considerations. Given the rapid evolution of electronic commerce, many Members attach importance to further focussed deliberations on a number of the issues raised.

The General Council has also made progress on a number of issues which nevertheless require further work amongst Members. I will mention just two:

- (i) first, with regard to derestriction and circulation of WTO documents, much work has taken place to explore ways of simplifying the current procedures. Hopefully this will bear fruit soon and further emphasize the WTO's commitment to transparency;
- (ii) secondly, on the basis of a proposal by a group of 14 countries, Members are addressing possible improvements to the Dispute Settlement Understanding. I must also mention that the subsidiary bodies to the General Council have continued their sterling efforts in administering the various agreements under their purviews, thus further consolidating the multilateral trading system.

**1. Implementation review process**

Turning now to the implementation review process relating to Uruguay Round agreements which was established by the General Council in May 2000, our work intensified considerably. In addition to the General Council's three Special Sessions on this subject in 2001, there were very extensive informal consultations. I must acknowledge the enormous efforts made by all sides –

including by Members, by the Director-General and his colleagues in the Secretariat, by the Chairpersons of the relevant WTO bodies and by my predecessor Ambassador Bryn.

Our deliberations over the past two years have yielded a much greater understanding of how the expressed concerns might be addressed, through decisions for immediate action and in the context of the future work programme to be decided by Ministers here at Doha. An initiative by a group of seven Members in June induced signs of real progress. The Director-General and myself were subsequently able to put forward, for the General Council's consideration, draft decisions to address all outstanding implementation-related issues and concerns. The draft decision of 1 November has been transmitted on our own responsibility to Ministers here in Doha for consideration. It is our assessment that most elements of this text are acceptable to Members, and that Ministers therefore need to devote their time to a limited number of outstanding issues in order to reach final agreement.

## **2. Preparations for the Fourth Session of the Ministerial Conference**

Preparations for the Fourth Session of the Ministerial Conference have involved extensive efforts to develop a draft Ministerial Declaration, as well as a separate draft Declaration on Intellectual Property and Access to Medicines or Public Health – an issue to which many Members attach great importance. This process has been both transparent and inclusive, and I would like to thank all delegations for their committed and constructive spirit, goodwill and hard work.

Although all delegations showed a willingness to engage constructively and considerable progress was indeed made, the distance between positions in some key areas remained significant. In an effort to provide a basis for eventual consensus, the Director-General and I put forward on 27 October, on our own responsibility, draft texts of a Ministerial Declaration and a Declaration on Intellectual Property and Access to Medicines or Public Health, making it clear that these texts did not purport to be agreed in whole or in part at this stage.

The Director-General and I are satisfied that these texts, which we have also transmitted to Ministers under our own responsibility, represent the best possible basis for Ministers to build on in the course of their work at this Session. We are confident that Ministers have in their grasp the elements necessary to reach a positive and balanced result from their important deliberations here in Doha on the WTO's future work programme.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all Members for their continuous support and cooperation, as well as to the Chairpersons of all WTO bodies for their hard work, determination and valuable assistance throughout the year. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Director-General of the WTO, Mr. Mike Moore, and his Deputies for their tireless efforts and support in the preparatory process leading to this Ministerial Conference. Finally, let me join the Director-General in thanking Your Highness for the outstanding generosity of your Government in inviting us to Doha for this important Conference which, I am sure, will long be remembered as a milestone in the WTO's development.

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